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Abigail Adams as a Typical Massachusetts
Woman at the Close of the Colonial Area

ABIGAIL ADAMS AS A TYPICAL
MASSACHUSETTS WOMAN AT THE
CLOSE OF THE COLONIAL ERA

BY

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THE CLOSE OF THE COLONIAL ERA

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ABIGAIL ADAMS AS A TYPICAL MASSACHUSETTS WOMAN AT THE
CLOSE OF THE COLONIAL ERA.

I

"The Woman's Part"

It was in the late eighteenth century that Abigail Adams lived. It was a time not unlike our own, a time of disturbed international relations, of war. School boys know the names of the heroes and the statesmen of '76, but they have never heard the names of the women. Those names are not mentioned; they are forgotten. The domestic life of the women was one of battles, such as we women know nothing of today, miles of separation with irregular mail and no telephones, cold houses, and inconveniences. History rarely mentions these lesser battles. Women fought them bravely and silently. Years have passed, and the women are forgotten. The deeds of men are counted and re-told; their bravery and courage are praised. To sacrifice and to give silently is "the woman's part".

II

Domestic Life in Massachusetts at the Close of the
Colonial Era

Domestic life in Massachusetts was a reproduction of that in New England. A very common form of dwelling, almost peculiar to New England, was a house two stories high in the front, the roof of which from a sharp gable sloped down at the back to a low story known as the "linter",¹ lean-to, or leanter². The front door opened on a narrow space. Directly behind the door, four or five feet away, were the crooked stairs. On either side of the door was a room, one, the common sitting room, and the other, the best parlor, stiff, uncomfortable, and unventilated, entered only upon the Sabbath or great occasions, such as a funeral, a wedding, or a christening. In the "linter" were the kitchen and washroom³. The furniture was modest. There were few beds, possibly one of feathers, but generally of wool or of cornhusks, some bolsters, blankets, and coverlids; only, however, in the cases of the more wealthy families was there bed-linen. A table or tables, a few chairs, with cushions and covers in the homes of the rich, stools, pewter and earthenware dishes, brass and

1 Eggleston, "The Colonists at Home" in the Century Magazine, VII. n.s., pp. 876-877.

2 Adams, Three Episodes of Massachusetts History, II, p. 683.

3 Ibid.

iron pots and pans⁴ comprised the remaining furnishings. The Bible and a few books⁵ indicated the limited educational advantages. The birthplaces of John Adams and John Quincy Adams were houses of this common type.⁶ The Clifford farmhouse, the home of James Warren and Mercy Otis Warren, was a small, gambrel-roofed building with one room on either side of the front door. There has not been so much changed save that the tiny window panes have been replaced by modern windows.⁷

A noticeable specimen of the best architecture of the colonial times was the Quincy house,⁸ which Colonel Josiah Quincy built in 1770 on the ground that had been granted to his ancestor, Edmund Quincy, as early as 1635.⁹ There was a broad hall in the center with an easy, winding staircase and its carved balustrade. From the hall there opened to the south and the west two fairly large rooms with low studded ceilings. There were little ship-like lockers and other little attempts to economize space, while space was everywhere wasted. The broken line of the floors and ceilings tells of enlargements. One of the rooms has yet on its walls the queer, old Chinese paper which tradition says was hung there in 1775 in honor of the approaching marriage

4 Adams, Op. cit., p. 684.

5 Ibid.

6 Earle, Home Life in Colonial Days, p. 22.

7 Brown, Mercy Warren, p. 36.

8 Adams, Op. cit., p. 680.

9 Drake, Our Colonial Homes, p. 68.

of Dorothy Quincy and John Hancock;¹⁰ the ceremony was performed in Fairfield, Connecticut.¹¹ In 1787, John Adams bought the mansion, built by Leonard Vassall in 1731 as the summer home of the West India planter.¹² It was a plain, gambrel-roofed building with a balconied porch.¹³ All the ceilings were low.¹⁴ One of the rooms was panelled from floor to ceiling in St. Domingo mahogany.¹⁵ Fine old trees stood there among the box-bordered walks, conservatories, and flower-beds. The barn with its antique weather-vane has been removed.¹⁶ The house stands to-day. The furniture is either family heirlooms or pieces of foreign make brought from Holland. Tall chests of drawers of solid mahogany with wonderful brasses and fantastically curved legs and one portly Dutch bureau in particular¹⁷ remain as silent actors of the past. There hang the Stuart portraits of John Adams and his wife, Abigail; Copley's John Quincy Adams at twenty; John Quincy, Abigail Adams's maternal grandfather, at six; Colonel William

10 Adams, Op. cit., p. 680.

Sears, John Hancock, p. 164, describes the wall paper of this parlor as brought from Paris, appropriately figured "with the forms of Venus and Cupid in blue and pendant wreaths of flowers in red".

11 Adams, p. 681.

12 Ibid.

13 Drake, Op. cit., p. 91.

14 Ibid. p. 96.

15 Adams, p. 681.

16 Drake, p. 91.

17 Drake, Op. cit., p. 92.

Stephens Smith, her only son-in-law; Stuart's John Quincy Adams and Leslie's Mrs. Louisa Catherine Adams; and Savage's General Washington and Mrs. Washington with a head-dress "fearfully and wonderfully made."¹⁸ Charles Francis Adams erected an interesting addition in a library, a separate building of stone, for the books and manuscripts of his father, John Quincy Adams. There are a number of bound folios containing the voluminous correspondence of the elder Adams.¹⁹ These houses were typical homes of the landed gentry,²⁰ yet we can hardly realize their primitiveness. They were cold. Samuel Adams wrote from Philadelphia in 1775 to Mrs. Elizabeth Wells Adams: "My Son informs me in a late Letter, that you were about removing to little Cambridge. I am exceedingly pleased with it, because I am sure you could not be comfortable in your house at Dedlam in the cold Season."²¹ In spite of the huge wood fires, women sat at the table in shawls and men in overcoats.²² It is little wonder that John Adams in the last years of his life used to wish that he could go to sleep in the autumn like a dormouse and not wake until spring.²³

18 Drake, Op. cit., pp. 96-99.

19 Ibid., p. 99.

20 Adams, Op. cit., p. 681.

21 Cushing, The Writings of Samuel Adams, III, p. 239.

22 Adams, Op. cit., p. 682.

23 Ibid.

In Boston, there was a little reproduction of court life in the circle gathered around the royal governors. The pride of the wealthy expressed itself in handsome and stately mansions.²⁴ There were the Hutchinson House on Milton Hill and the Hancock House in Boston. These houses, however, never erred in over-ornamentation.²⁵ Social classes were less known in "levelling" New England, but one need only see the fine colonial houses to know that all could not afford to have them; there must have been class distinctions.²⁶

As in the dwellings and their furniture, there were variations in the food and drink. Generally speaking, however, they were simple. For the sake of the English fisheries, the people of Massachusetts dutifully ate salt-fish dressed with butter and hard-boiled eggs on Saturday until after the Revolution.²⁷ The great stand-by was Indian-corn meal. Milk, beer, cider, rum, tea, and coffee were beverages.²⁸ There was more drinking in those days. Thomas and John Hancock drank wines and punch.²⁹

24 Earle, Home Life in Colonial Days, p. 27.

25 Ibid., pp. 27-28.

26 Sparks, The Expansion of the American People, p. 54.

27 Eggleston, "The Colonists at Home" in the Century Magazine, VII n.s., p. 882.

28 Adams, Op. cit., pp. 685-686.

29 Drake, Op. cit., pp. 8, 14.

John Adams drank his tankard of cider every morning.³⁰

The dwellings and the food seem simple in their primitiveness. The dresses of the women before the enforced economy seem extravagant and strange. Belles wore long trains to their gowns of rich brocade, their skirts opened in the front, trimmed and sometimes embroidered stomachers. Almost all the ladies wore elbow ruffles. In walking, they threw their trains over their arm displaying dainty silk stockings and sharp-toed slippers.³¹ When Mrs. Dorothy Quincy Hancock sat for Copley for her portrait, she wore a dress of pink damask, opened in front, showing a petticoat of white satin, trimmed with silver lace; there was white lace on the sleeves and at the neck.³² Copley's portrait of Mrs. Mercy Otis Warren shows her wearing a head dress of white lace trimmed with white-satin ribbons, a robe of dark-green satin with a pompadour waist trimmed with point lace. There is a full plait at the back hanging from the shoulders, and her sleeves are of point lace. White illusion trimmed with point lace and fastened with a white-satin bow is about her neck. The front of her skirt and of her sleeves are elaborately trimmed with puffings of satin.³³ Old ladies wore gowns of brocade in sober

30 Adams, Three Episodes of Massachusetts History, II. pp. 686-687.

31 Weeden, Economic and Social History of New England, II, p. 743.

32 Scudder in Winsor, The Memorial History of Boston, II, p. 456.

33 Scudder, Op. cit., p. 457.

colors, nice lawn handkerchiefs and aprons, close caps of linen or lawn edged with lace; black mittens; and hoods of velvet or silk.³⁴

In Mrs. Earle's enumeration of costumes many obsolete, new to us, names occur. An open gown worn looped at the sides and trailing behind was a polonese.³⁵ Wraps were called artois, Brunswicks, capuchins, cardinals, mantles, mantuas, pelerines, shawls, and surtouts.³⁶ Dress-goods were: "Figur'd Spangl'd Brasselets"; brawls, brauls; grazzets; sergedenim; durant, a close-grained woollen stuff named for its strength and wearing qualities; hum-hum, a plain coarse-meshed Indian fabric made of cotton; say, originally a silk material, later a thin worsted stuff; shag, a heavy cloth with a long nap. Ducape was a heavy silk of a plain color corresponding somewhat to the Ottoman silk of the nineteenth century. Elizabeth Porter's wedding gown in 1770 was of brown ducape. Eighteen years later it was made over, and forty years from the wedding day it was still in existence and good enough to be refashioned.³⁷ If the women of the colonial times wore quaint clothes, their apparel lasted longer than that of the twentieth century. The Newport Mercury of 1783

34 Weeden, Op. cit., p. 743.

35 Earle, Costume of Colonial Times, pp. 189-190.

36 Ibid., pp. 49, 67, 79, 81, 155-156,
180, 216, 242.

37 Ibid., pp. 62, 120, 213, 104, 142,
212, 215, 102.

advertised the fashionable colors of "Plumb, Pink, Flaystale,
Cinnamon, and Laylock" lustring, a soft plain silk.³⁸ Mrs. Adams
wore a gown of white lustring³⁹ when she was presented at St.
James's Court.

Salem newspapers advertised in 1784, "Thread and
Net Buffonts" and "Gauze Buffons", protective coverings for a
lady's throat.⁴⁰ Other protections were the tippet⁴¹ and the pilgrim,
a cape or a plaiting of thin silk fastened to the back of the
bonnet.⁴² Mittens and mitts were made of cotton or linen material
like the dress, freshly starched and ironed for Sunday wear, and
buttoned to the shoulder of the dress.⁴³ Breast knots, girdles,
gloves and glove tightens, ribbons, detached pockets, and separate
sleeves were accessories. Brooches were not named until 1775
when there appeared "mocus and marquasite broaches" for sale;
later there were "gold broaches with devices of hair and pearl."
Buckles, ear-rings, locketts for both the arm and the neck, and
necklaces were the jewelry worn. Fans⁴⁴ were used. Mrs. Hancock's
wedding fan of white kid painted with appropriate designs came

38 Earle, Op. cit., p. 154.

39 Adams, Letters of Mrs. Adams, letter to Mrs. Cranch from
London, 24 June, 1785, p. 255.

40 Earle, Op. cit., p. 68.

41 Ibid., p. 246.

42 Ibid., p. 184.

43 Ibid., pp. 160-161.

44 Ibid., pp. 63, 115, 116, 118, 197, 188, 230, 66,
67, 104, 153, 167, 109.

from Paris.⁴⁵ Women wore bosom bottles for flowers.⁴⁶ They carried equipages or etui holding scissors, knife, thimble, pencil, tooth-pick case, tweezers, ear-pick, bodkin, and nail-cleaner.⁴⁷ With the bosom bottles and etui have gone the patch boxes with their little posies and rhymes "For Beauty's Face."⁴⁸

Women's shoes were of embroidered satin,⁴⁹ damask, cloth, and everlasting.⁵⁰ The Boston Evening Post, in 1742, advertised women's shoes of fine silk: "flower'd Russel, white callimanco, Black Russel, Black Shammy, & Girls Flower'd Russel Shoes, Black velvet, white Damask, & flower'd silk clogs, Womens black & childrens red Morocco shoes and pumps". About 1790, the shoes were sandal-shaped foot-gear with thin soles, and low or no heels. Goloshes, shoes with soles of wood or leather for outdoor wear, were advertised until 1776.⁵¹

To the modern woman, the head dresses of the eighteenth century are the most old-fashioned parts of the costumes. Masks of black velvet, white, green, and natural colored silk were worn to protect the complexion against the wind, sun, and cold.

45 Brown, John Hancock, p. 242.

46 Earle, Op. cit., pp. 61-62.

47 Ibid., pp. 105-106.

48 Ibid., pp. 177-178.

49 Weeden, Op. cit., p. 743.

50 Earle, Op. cit., p. 224.

51 Ibid., pp. 223, 225, 119.

In almost every list of goods offered to New England shoppers from 1760 to 1790, they were included; they must have been universally worn. Women wore calashes, caps, hats, mercuries, and turbans.⁵² Bonnets were advertised in 1760 as "Sattin Bonnets", "Quilted Bonnets and Kitty Fisher Bonnets", "Quebeck and Garrick Bonnets". In the following year there came "Prussian and Ranelagh Bonnets." In July, 1764, there were Leghorn and Queens Bonnets, "drawn lace and rich lac'd bonnets," and "women's neat-made mourning bonnets." Mary Gabriel, a milliner in Hartford, in 1775 charged a shilling for a plain bonnet and two shillings and six-pence for making the newest-fashioned bonnet. "Plain and Masquered newest fashion crimson, blue, pink, white and black bonnets" were worn.⁵³ In 1784, "Air Balloon" and "Princess" hats of French fashion were advertised.⁵⁴ In 1786, Emily and Marlborough hats were the fashion.⁵⁵ Well might Mrs. Adams write to Mrs. Storer in 1785, "Abbey has made you a minature handkerchief, just to show you one mode; but caps, hats, and handkerchiefs are as various as ladies' and milliners' fancies can devise."⁵⁶

52 Earle, Op. cit., pp. 157-158, 72, 78, 130-131, 159, 249.

53 Ibid., p. 59.

54 Ibid., p. 130.

55 Ibid., p. 131.

56 Adams, Letters of Mrs. Adams, letter to Mrs. Storer from Auteuil, 20 January, 1785, p. 231.

The "commode" or "tower" head-dress rose to great height in the days of Queen Anne and declined to rise in the years just preceding the Revolution.⁵⁷ In 1771, Anne Winslow wrote from Boston to her mother in the country of her head-dress, a roll of red cow's tail mixed with horse-hair and a little human hair of yellow color, all carded and twisted together and built up until by actual measurement the head-dress was an inch longer than her face below it.⁵⁸ On another lady, she continued, "I saw him twist and tug and pick and cut off whole locks of gray hair at a slice for the space of an hour and a half, when I left him, he seeming not to be near done."⁵⁹ Hair-pins appeared in Boston first in 1755.⁶⁰ Hair-clasps came in about 1800.⁶¹ Egrets or aigrets⁶² and pompons⁶³ were ornaments worn in head-dresses. Sometimes the hair was dressed over a silk cushion stuffed with wool.⁶⁴ It is not surprising that the

57 Eggleston, "The Colonists at Home" in the Century Magazine, VII. n.s., p. 888.

58 Ibid., pp. 888-889.
Earle, Child Life in Colonial Days, p. 58.

59 Eggleston, Op. cit., p. 889.

60 Earle, Costume of Colonial Times, p. 122.

61 Ibid., p. 121.

62 Ibid., p. 105.

63 Ibid., pp. 191-192.

64 Weeden, Op. cit., p. 743.

Revolutionary soldier sang,

"Ladies you had better leave off your high rolls
Lest by extravagance you lose your poor souls
Then haul out the wool, and likewise the tow
'Twill clothe our whole army we very well know." 65

During the War, women wore thirteen curls at the neck as the "Dress-à-la-Independence." 66 The dress was simpler under the enforced economy. After all this enumeration, one must remember that the wearing apparel was for a great part homespun, worn and reworn. 67

Boston was changed little in appearance, habits, and style in 1800 from the preceding years. 68 The women having powdered, greased, and pulled their hair almost off their heads wore wigs. 69

The home was the center of activity for the women. Their education was the slightest. They did various "fine works", such as the making of needle work cornucopias, the elaboration of shell work, the making of flowers from silk cuttings, 70 and papyrotamia or paper cutting. 71 Their most universal accomplishment was the making of samplers. 72 Some of these samplers have been

65 Earle, Customs and Fashions in Old New England, p. 292.

66 Ibid., p. 293.

67 Adams, Three Episodes of Massachusetts History, II, p. 684.

68 Adams, History of the United States, I, p. 91.

69 Earle, Costume of Colonial Times, p. 263.

70 Eggleston, "Social Life in the Colonies" in the Century Magazine VIII. n.s., p. 403.

71 Earle, Home Life in Colonial Days, p. 277.

72 Earle, Colonial Dames and Goodwives, p. 230.

preserved. One is that made by Miss Hannah Otis. It is a view of the Hancock House on the Boston Common and its neighborhood as they looked from 1755 to 1760; Governor Hancock is riding; the maid looking over the garden wall at the Charles River is Dorothy Quincy.⁷³ Another sampler is of the Old South Church in 1756; in the foreground there are hooped dames, a coach and a footman.⁷⁴ The women labored in those days. Their tasks of the annual spring manufacture of soft soap from refuse grease and wood ashes, of candle-dipping, of preparing wax from the bayberry, of the manufacture of farm-reared wool, flax, and hemp,⁷⁵ and of cheese-making⁷⁶ are performed by factories to-day. Mary Moody Emerson, aunt of Ralph Waldo and descendant of a line of ministers,⁷⁷ was born about 1774. Her maturity came during the last years of Abigail Adams's life, but her activities were similar. A week from Miss Emerson's diary shows those strenuous activities. She wrote: "Rose before light every morning; visited from necessity once, and again for books; read Butler's Analogy; commented on the Scripture; read in a little book, Cicero's Letters,- a few; touched Shakespeare; washed, carded, cleaned house, and baked."⁷⁸

73 Earle, Home Life in Colonial Days, p. 268.

74 Ibid.

75 Earle, Colonial Dames and Goodwives, pp. 301-302, 303, 304, 309-311.

76 Earle, Home Life in Colonial Days, p. 252.

77 Weeden, *Op. cit.*, p. 862.

78 Emerson, "Mary Moody Emerson" in the Atlantic Monthly, LII, p. 733.

Neighborliness entered into the women's work. They exchanged days of making soap or apple-butter, sewing rag-carpe ts, and house-cleaning.⁷⁹

There were exceptional incidents in their duties. In the New England coast towns, women constantly heard on all sides the discussion of foreign trade. They invested in this traffic their small accumulation of money earned by braiding straw, knitting stockings, selling eggs or butter, or by spinning and weaving. In 1759, a young woman sent a pair of earrings to "Captain Oliver to carry them a Ventur fer me if he Thinks they will fetch anything to the Vally of them; tell him he may bring the effects in anything he thinks will answer best." Boston women gave assistance to their printer-husbands. Mrs. Ezekiel Russel was especially helpful in her ballad-making. During the siege of Boston, the only newspaper in the town was Widow Margaret Draper's Massachusetts Gazette and Boston News Letter.⁸⁰

The New England faith was strong and all-important. It seems severe and rigid to the twentieth-century. Puritan New England and Quaker Philadelphia frowned upon the concert singers or strolling actors who came from England to appear in the theatres of the South and New York.⁸¹ The first theatre built in Boston was in 1793.⁸² New England forbade dancing schools, but dancing could not be repressed in an age in which the range of

79 Earle, Op. cit., p. 417.

80 Earle, Colonial Dames and Goodwives, pp. 69-71, 66, 67.

81 Sparks, The Expansion of the American People, p. 53.

82 Ibid., note on p. 53.

amusements was so narrow.⁸³ In that age, the minister was the man
 of the town.⁸⁴ He stood, every Sunday, before his people endowed
 with a personal sanctity; he presided over a community of church-
 goers; he had a paternal care for everything and everyone in it.⁸⁵
 That minister has gone before this practical generation. Meaningful
 names were given to the children, as Abigail meaning father's joy.
 Hannah meaning grace;⁸⁶ and names indicating religious feeling
 as Delight and Mercy. The church was a social center as well as
 a religious organization.⁸⁷ Psalms were sung at home and at church,
 that part of the service was always enjoyed by the young people.⁸⁸
 The replenishing of the minister's house was often furnished in
 the latter part of the eighteenth century by an annual "Spinning
 Bee." Quilts were pieced then. The minister would preach an
 applicable sermon, as one was taken from Proverbs, chapter thirty-
 one and verse nineteen,⁸⁹ "She hath put out her hand to strong
 things and her fingers have taken hold of the spindle." The women
 of those days rejoiced that they had the long sermon as they
 worked. They read in their leisure time, like Miss Hannah Adams,
 such forgotten religious works as Mrs. Rowe's Devout Exercises.⁹⁰

83 Eggleston, "Social Life in the Colonies" in the Century Magazine, VIII. n.s., p. 401.

84 Brown, Mercy Warren, p. 9.

85 Drake, Our Colonial Homes, p. 115.

86 Earle, Child Life in Colonial Days, p. 16.

87 Adams, Three Episodes in Massachusetts History, II, p. 750.

88 Drake, Op. cit., p. 113.

89 Earle, The Sabbath in Puritan New England, pp. 300-301.

90 Adams, Hannah, Memoir, p. 10.

The New England Sabbath was a strict fulfillment of the third commandment. It was a day for thought, prayer, and church. "Any person able of Body who shall absent themselves from publick worship of God on the Lord's Day shall pay ten shillings fine", was the act passed by the legislature of Massachusetts in 1760.⁹¹ The Lord's Day, according to Miss Emily Adams, began on the Saturday preceding, when the minister visited the schools and questioned the children on the catechism. "On Saturday night," quoting Miss Adams, "holy time commenced..... A prayer meeting was usually held with special reference to the worship of God to be held on the morrow..... The family rose early.....the services were protracted, the prayer before the sermon then deserving its name of the 'long prayer'..... no fires in the churches."⁹² This keeping the Sabbath holy is revealed in Mrs. Adams's letter to her husband, September 14, 1774. A group of men took the powder from Charlestown and burned Vinton's papers, "they called a vote whether they should huzza; but it⁹³ being Sunday evening, it passed in the negative!"

The Church reflected public opinion throughout the War. There were fasts and prayers for the cause of the colonies. Ministers in their long sermons drew applications from the Bible to the prevailing state. America was like unto Isreal, according to the Reverend Mr. Duffield of Philadelphia,

91 Earle, The Sabbath in Puritan New England, p. 250.

92 Brown, The Story of John Adams, A New England Schoolmaster, pp. 122-124.

93 Adams, Letters of Mrs. Adams, pp. 15-16.

94

and George like unto Pharaoh. Mrs. Adams heard a sermon in Boston in which the minister told his congregation that he believed the sin for which a righteous God had come out in judgment against them was their bigoted attachment to so wicked a man as George the Third.⁹⁵

The education colonial women received in the schoolroom was meager. "The country schools," wrote Miss Hannah Adams, "at that time, were kept but a few months in the year, and all that was then taught in them was reading, writing and arithmetic. In the summer, the children were instructed by females in reading, sewing, and other kinds of work. The books chiefly made use of were the Bible, and Psalter."⁹⁶ Children read and learned the contents of the Day of Doom, Idolaters, Blasphemers, Swearers shrewd, Covetous and Ravenous, Cotton's Spiritual Milk for Babes, and the Bay Psalm Book.⁹⁷ Mrs. Adams had "a great opinion of Dr. Watt's 'Moral Songs for Children.' They are adapted to their capacities, and they comprehend all the social and relative duties of life. They impress the young mind with the ideas of the Supreme Being, as their creator, benefactor, and preserver. They teach brotherly love, sisterly affection, and filial respect and reverence."⁹⁸

94 Adams, Familiar Letters of John Adams and His Wife, Mrs. Adams, p. 173.

95 Ibid., p. 205.

96 Adams, Hannah, Memoir, p. 3.

97 Brown, Mercy Warren, pp. 18-19.

98 Adams, Letters of Mrs. Adams, letter to Mrs. Smith, her daughter, pp. 355-356.

"But, in this country, you need not be told how much female education is neglected, nor how fashionable it has been to ridicule female learning", wrote Mrs. Adams in one of her letters.⁹⁹ Her grandson, Charles Francis Adams, thought this contempt for educated women may have been an outgrowth of the experience with Mrs. Hutchinson.¹⁰⁰ In his History of New England, 1640, Governor John Winthrop described "A godly young Woman of special parts, who was fallen into a sad infirmity, the loss of her understanding and reason, which had been growing upon her divers years by occasion of giving herself wholly to reading and writing and had written many books. Her husbände was loath to grieve her; but he saw his error when it was too late. For if she had attended to her household affairs, and such things as belong to women, and not gone out of her way and calling to meddle in such things as are proper for men whose minds are stronger, she had kept her Wits, and might have improved them usefully and honorably."¹⁰¹ A professional anecdote of James Otis illustrates the condition of women. During a trial a young woman excited his attention; he obtained the permission

99 Adams, Letters of Mrs. Adams, letter to John Adams, pp. 97-99.

100 Ibid., Memoir, XXIII.

101 Earle, Child Life in Colonial Days, p. 90.

of the Court to question her.

"Where were you born, ma'am?" he asked.

"In the next town, Sir."

"Where were you educated?"

"There, Sir."

"Where have you travelled?"

"Never out of this county, Sir."

Mr. Otis raised his hands and exclaimed,

"'Full many a flower is born to blush unseen
And waste its sweetness on the desert air'".¹⁰²

Such was the lot of the women of those days. Mrs. Adams did not wonder that the few women who might be really called learned were considered as black swans.¹⁰³ The home was the woman's world. That world expected but needlework and housewifery of the woman; if she sang a little, painted a little, and played the spinet, harpsichord, or virginal she was more educated than the average.¹⁰⁴ As Mrs. Warren wrote in a satirical letter of advice to a young lady, it was considered that "Science of any kind beyond the Toilet, the Tea, or the Card Table, is as Unnecessary to a Lady's figuring in the Drawing Room as Virtue unsully'd by Caprice is to the Character of the finish'd Gentleman."¹⁰⁵

102 Tudor, The Life of James Tudor, pp. 24-25.

103 Adams, Letters of Mrs. Adams, letter to F. A. Vanderkemp, p.416.

104 Brown, Mercy Warren, p. 23.

105 Ibid., pp. 23-24.

If the women had little time for methodical education, they read a great deal and they read faithfully.¹⁰⁶ They read the best of English literature, Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, Pope, Addison, Young, and always the Bible.

The romantic temper of the times reflected the characteristics of the eighteenth century writers of the Mother Country. Their personifications of the virtues and vices were the common property of the colonists. Hannah Adams described Nathan Hale as "a character, in the flower of youth, cheerfully treading in the most hazardous paths."¹⁰⁷ Boston was to die in a noble cause for John Adams, the cause of truth, virtue, liberty, and humanity.¹⁰⁸ Mrs. Adams wished that the foundation of the new Constitution might be "Justice, Truth, Righteousness!"¹⁰⁹ In writing of John Quincy Adams's future, she said, "the curtain rises before him, and instead of Peace waving her olive-branch, or Liberty, seated in a triumphal car, or Commerce, Agriculture, and Plenty, pouring forth their stores, Sedition hisses, Treason roars, Rebellion gnashes her teeth, Mercy suspends the justly merited blow, but Justice strikes the guilty victim."¹¹⁰ The writers used allusions to mythology and to the Bible and quoted poetry extensively.

106 Mrs. Ednah D. Cheney in Winsor, The Memorial History of Boston, IV, p. 340.

107 Stedman and Hutchinson, A Library of American Literature, IV, p. 67.

108 Adams, Familiar Letters, p. 2.

109 Ibid., p. 201.

110 Adams, Letters of Mrs. Adams, letter to Mrs. Crouch, her sister, p. 327.

The intellectual activity was chiefly in religious
 111
 discourse, in historical narrative, and in controversy. Very
 little of these writings is readable to-day. There was no
 112
 genuine poetry. The songs and ballads of the Revolution collected
 by Mr. Frank Moore are on liberty, independence, taxation, and tea.
 They are not good poetry; neither are Mrs. Warren's poems.

In the place of the women's clubs and the reading
 rooms of the modern women, the colonial dames' correspondence
 was their intercourse. "In those days," says Mr. Tyler, "men and
 women still took time to write letters, and to write them with
 their own hands, and to put ideas into what they wrote, and the
 individual touch, deliberate and deft expression, playfulness,
 113
 and grace, and force." This letter-writing of the New England
 women emphasized their difference from the Dutch women. Mrs.
 Quincy, Mrs. Warren, and Mrs. Adams were writers. The Dutch women
 of New York were good mothers and wives, but not pen-women. 114
 115
 Abigail Adams, Mercy Warren, and their husbands corresponded.
 Hannah Winthrop, Abigail Adams, and Mercy Warren were a corre-
 sponding trio. Like the pseudonyms from over the sea as Rosania,
 the "adored Valeria", the "dazzling Polycrite", and "noble
 Palaemon", these women used assumed and high-sounding names,

111 Tyler, The Literary History of the American Revolution, I,
 p. 184.

112 Ibid., p. 185.

113 Ibid., p. 13.

114 Humphreys, Catherine Schuyler, p. 10.

115 Brown, Mercy Warren, p. 49.

usually classical. When Mrs. Winthrop was Honoria, Mrs. Warren was Philomela, the nightingale. When Mrs. Winthrop was Narcissa, Mrs. Warren introduced her to Mrs. Adams, Portia. Mrs. Warren corresponded with Mrs. Montgomery, Mrs. Hancock, Mrs. Washington, Samuel Adams, Jefferson, Dickinson, Gerry, Knox, and Washington.¹¹⁶

The scheme originated by Samuel Adams and known as the Committee of Correspondence was but a public use of the corresponding circle.

The dwellings, the costumes, the work, the faith, the education, and the amusements have an old-fashioned attractiveness. They are of the past. The one common element which appeals to us is the patriotism of the women. There were extravagances, however, besides the sacrifices. John Adams maintained that the sin which prevailed more universally and longer was prodigality in furniture, equipage, apparel, and diet.¹¹⁷ When America determined to suspend commerce with England, John Winthrop asked Mrs. Warren for a poetical list of the necessities of life the women would wish. Her reply was Trifling Needs. These "needs" were rich embroidered gown, lawns, lustrings, blond and Mechlin laces, fringes, jewels, fans, tweezer-cases, gay cloaks and hats of every shape and size, scarfs, cardinals, ribbons, ruffles, aprons, tippets, handkerchiefs, finest muslins of India, choice herbage, feathers, furs, rich satins, ducares, head dresses in pyramidal shapes, plate, and porcelein. The American woman substituted

116 Brown, Mercy Warren, pp. 55-56.

117 Adams, Familiar Letters, p. 14.

the careless polanee,

"Until some fair one from Britannia's court,
Some jaunty dress, or newer taste import;
This sweet temptation could not be withstood,
Though for the purchase's paid her father's blood;
Though loss of freedom were the costly price." 118

There were too many high sounding words and too few actions that corresponded with them to suit Mrs. Adams. She spent a Sabbath in Boston in the fall of 1774, and she saw no difference in respect to ornament.¹¹⁹ She hoped, "by degrees, we shall be inured to hardships, and become a virtuous, valiant people, forgetting our former luxury, and each one apply with industry and frugality to manufactures and husbandry, till we rival all other nations by our virtues."¹²⁰ Both the Adamses lamented the extravagances of the people.¹²¹ On October 29, 1778, Governor Hancock gave a ball at the Concert Hall in Boston, at which were present Count D'Estaing and a number of officers of his fleet. "There were," according to the New York Journal, "upwards of a hundred of the principal ladies of the town present, who, being richly and elegantly dressed, added a most enchanting brilliancy to the evening, and, in the eyes of their countrymen, at least, gave no

118 Warren, Poems, pp. 208-212.

119 Adams, Letters of Mrs. Adams, letter to her husband, pp. 21-22.

120 Ibid., letter to her husband from Braintree, October 21, 1775, pp. 53-55.

121 Adams, Familiar Letters, p. 334.

Cushing, The Writings of Samuel Adams, IV, pp. 67-68; 123-125.

bad specimen of American female grace and beauty." ¹²² Even in 1781, "small articles have the best profit; gauze, ribbons, feathers, and flowers, to make the ladies gay, have the best advance," Mrs. Adams wrote to John Adams in France. ¹²³

Massachusetts had, however,

"Her good Cornelias, and her Arrias fair". ¹²⁴

Though the delegates at Philadelphia were out of harm's reach, they loved to have their joke about the hangman's noose. The post of real danger was Boston, for the women at home, ¹²⁵ but these women were brave patriots. They were patient in their enduring of hardships. According to Mrs. Adams, Burgoyne spoiled the mahogany tables of her friends by cutting up meat on them and exposed their best damask curtains to the rain. ¹²⁶ They gave up amusements. The winter after the arrival of the British troops, some of the crown officers got up a series of dances, but outside of their own circle they could not induce any ladies to attend. ¹²⁷ The women resisted the gay uniforms and music. They disregarded all luxuries. They wore homespun. Hannah Adams made and sold lace, which was tolerated only while no other could be procured. ¹²⁸ They ate no lamb and mutton in order that the sheep might be devoted to the production

122 Moore, Diary of the American Revolution, II. p. 102 and note.

123 Adams, Letters of Mrs. Adams, p. 131.

124 Warren, Poems, "Trifling Needs," p. 212.

125 Drake, Our Colonial Homes, p. 86.

126 Adams, Letters of Mrs. Adams, p. 46.

127 Ellet, Domestic History of the American Revolution, p. 28.

128 Adams, Hannah, Memoir, pp. 11, 68.

of wool for clothing. They gave up their beloved pewter and the lead from windowpanes for bullets.¹²⁹ After the men left for the army, the women put in the crops.¹³⁰

During the War, there was a great scarcity of sugar and coffee. Merchants secreted a large quantity, and sold small measures from time to time at exorbitant prices.¹³¹ Mrs. Adams described to her husband an interesting incident that took place in Boston. It was heard that a wealthy bachelor, Thomas Boylston, had a hogshead of coffee in his store, which he would not sell under six shillings pound. "A number of females, some say a hundred, some say more, assembled with a cart and trucks, marched down to the warehouse, and demanded the keys, which he refused to deliver. Upon which, one of them seized him by his neck, and tossed him into the cart. Upon his finding no quarter, he delivered the keys, when they tipped up the cart and discharged him; they opened the warehouse, hoisted out the coffee themselves, put it into the truck, and drove off. It was reported, that he had personal chastisement among them; but this, I believe was not true. A large concourse of men stood amazed, silent spectators of the whole transaction."¹³² Mr. Adams replied, "By the account in your last letter, it seems that the women in Boston begin to think themselves able to serve their country. What a pity it is

129 Brown, Mercy Warren, Chapter V, "The Woman's Part", especially pp. 100-101.

130 Moore, Songs and Ballads of the American Revolution, note on p. 114, from the Freeman's Journal of 1776.

131 Stewart, "Some Ancient New Women" in the Arena, XXVI, p. 517.
Earle, Colonial Dames and Goodwives, p. 249 f.

132 Adams, Letters of Mrs. Adams, letter of July 31, 1776, pp. 84-85.

that our Generals in the northern districts had not Aspasia's to their wives! I believe the two Howes have not very great women for wives. If they had, we should suffer more from their exertions than we do. This is our good fortune. A woman of good sense would not let her husband spend five weeks at sea in such a season of the year. A smart wife would have put Howe in possession of Philadelphia a long time ago." 133

Here is an example of the spirit of the women. An unmarried woman wrote to a British officer in Philadelphia, "I will tell you what I have done. My only brother I have sent to the camp with my prayers and blessings and had I twenty sons and brothers they should go. I have retracted every superfluous expense in my table and family. Tea I have not drunk since last Xmas, nor bought a new cap or gown since your defeat at Lexington, and, what I never did before, have learned to knit and am now making stockings of American wool for my servants, and in this way do I throw in my mite to the public good. I know this- that as free I can die but once; but as slave I shall not be worthy of life. I have the pleasure to assure you that these are the sentiments of all my sister Americans." 134

In those days there were no associations of women for charitable work or for reading; they met to drink tea together. In 1770, the mistresses of four hundred and ten families pledged

133 Adams, Familiar Letters, p. 290.

134 Ellet, Domestic History of the American Revolution, pp. 42-43.

themselves to drink no more tea until the revenue act was repealed.¹³⁵ A few days later a hundred and twenty young women formed a league:

"We, the daughters of those patriots, who have and and do now appear for the public interest, and in that principally regard their posterity,- as such do with pleasure engage with them in denying ourselves the drinking of foreign tea, in hope to frustrate a plan which tends to deprive a whole community of all that is valuable in life."¹³⁶

Women banded together in patriotic societies called Daughters of Liberty, agreeing to wear only garments of homespun manufacture, and to drink no tea.¹³⁷ This patriotic denial was widespread. When John Adams was in Falmouth, then a part of Massachusetts Bay, and now Portland, Maine, he stayed at Mrs. Huston's house. He wrote to his wife that he arrived there late in the afternoon after a drive of at least thirty-five miles.

"Madam," he said to Mrs. Huston, "is it lawful for a weary traveller to refresh himself with a dish of tea, provided it has been honestly smuggled, or paid no duties?"

"No, sir," she said, "we have renounced all tea in this place, but I'll make you coffee."¹³⁸

135 Hosmer, Samuel Adams, p. 158.

136 Ibid..

137 Earle, Home Life in Colonial Days, pp. 183-184.

138 Adams, Familiar Letters, p. 18.

It is said that in a day and a night a mother and her daughter in Townshend, Massachusetts, sheared a black and a white sheep, carded from the fleece, spun, wove, cut and made a suit of clothes for a boy to wear off to fight for liberty.¹³⁹ In the summer of 1775, Congress asked for thirteen thousand coats to be ready by winter; the handiwork of the patriotic women filled the order.¹⁴⁰ After the services on the Sabbath, special contributions were taken for the soldiers. Women brought to the New England meeting houses money, finger-rings, earrings, watches, all kinds of male attire- stockings, hats, coats, breeches, shoes- produce, and groceries.¹⁴¹ The women cared for the wounded soldiers at Charlestown,¹⁴² Bunker Hill,¹⁴³ and Valley Forge.¹⁴⁴ Verily those women played their part well.

"They staid at home and kept the hearthfires burning;

They spun and wove and tilled the barren soil;

They fought the 'fight of faith' with patient trusting,

And murmured not, through all the weary toil."¹⁴⁵

139 Earle, Home Life in Colonial Days, p. 203.

140 Ibid., p. 247.

141 Earle, The Sabbath in Puritan New England, pp. 118-119.

142 Ellet, The Women of the Revolution, I, p. 115.

143 Green, The Pioneer Mothers of America, II, p. 227.

144 Ibid., pp. 10, 13, 104.

145 Ibid., p. 8.

III

Prominent Women.

"We can," as Mrs. Ellet says, "only dwell upon individual instances of magnanimity, fortitude, self-sacrifice and heroism, bearing the impress of the feeling of Revolutionary days, indicative of the spirit which animated all, and to which, in its various and multiform exhibitions, we are not less indebted for national freedom, than to the swords of the patriots who poured out their blood."¹ Deborah Samson, our Joan of Arc, displayed her heroism by serving three years in the army.² Mrs. David Wright, Mrs. Job Shattuck of Groton, and neighboring women, dressed in their husbands' clothes and armed with muskets and pitchforks, collected at what is now Jewett's Bridge near Nashua and determined no foe should pass the bridge. They captured one Briton, Leonard Whiting.³

A patriotic woman of Massachusetts, a representative woman, was Mrs. Draper. When there came the first call to arms, she exhorted her husband to lose no time in hastening to the scene of action; she bound a knapsack and blanket on the shoulders of her only son, sixteen years of age, and bade him

1 Ellet, Domestic History of the American Revolution, p. 42.

2 Ellet, The Women of the American Revolution, I, p. 144.

3 Ibid., pp. 295-296.
Ellet, Domestic History of the American Revolution, pp. 31-32
and note on p. 32.

go to his duty. To the entreaties of her daughter that her brother might remain at home to be their protector, she answered that every arm able to aid the cause belonged to the country. "He is wanted and must go. You and I, Kate, have also service to do. Food must be prepared for the hungry; for before tomorrow night, hundreds, I hope thousands, will be on their way to join the continental forces. Some who have travelled far will need refreshment, and you and I, with Molly, must feed as many as we can." She spent the whole day and night and the succeeding day in baking brown bread. She fed the passing soldiers bread, cider, and cheese. When after Bunker Hill, General Washington called upon the inhabitants to send to headquarters every ounce of lead or pewter, Mrs. Draper gave all of her pewter. She helped further by making clothes for the soldiers.⁴

Mrs. Knox,⁵ the wife of General Knox, and Mrs. Hull,⁶ the wife of Major William Hull, followed their husbands to camp. By caring for the wounded soldiers, they started the American Red Cross work.

Miss Hannah Adams, a distant relative of President John Adams, received little education in the schools, but the books her father, a man whose ambition was to be a scholar, bought and sold made up for her scanty school-education.⁷ She was an

4 Ellet, The Women of the American Revolution, I, pp. 136-139.

5 Ibid., p. 130.

6 Ibid., p. 169.

7 Tarbell, "The American Woman," in the American Magazine, LXIX, p. 207.

ardent reader; in this respect she represented her sisters of Massachusetts. In her Memoir, she tells, "My first idea of the happiness of heaven was of a place where we should find our thirst for knowledge fully gratified."⁸ She read novels, history, biography, and poetry,- Milton, Thomson, and Young. The descriptions of the poets increased her love for nature.⁹ There is no trace of her corresponding with her friends, but she had a group with whom she discussed literature.¹⁰

She made bobbin lace during the enforced economy of the Revolution.¹¹ After the War, she resorted to writing as a means of making her livelihood. She was the first New England woman to adopt literature as a profession.¹² Her Views of Religions, published as early as 1784, met with success. After prolonged research made difficult by her failing eyesight, she published her Summary History of New England, in 1799.¹³ There followed An Abridgment of the History of New England, for the Use of Young Persons, View of the Christian Religion, History of the Jews, Letters on the Gospels, and The Truth and Excellence of the Christian Religion.¹⁴

8 Adams, Hannah, Memoir, p. 4.

9 Ibid., pp. 4-5.

10 Ibid., p. 7.

11 Ibid., pp. 11, 68.

12 Earle, Customs and Fashions in Old New England, p. 269.

13 Cummings in Winsor, The Memorial History of Boston, III, p. 641.

14 Adams, Hannah, Memoir, pp. 15, 22, 28, 32, 42, 93.

The second wife of Samuel Adams was Elizabeth Wells Adams. He was a patriot. Content with his small income, he gave his services to the public. Her patriotism was as great as his. It was she, an excellent housewife, who eked out by her close economy his income, so that few comforts were wanting.¹⁵ He appreciated her work; he wrote from New York in 1775, "Make use of the money in your hands for your Comfort. I have always been well satisfied in your Prudence."¹⁶

From Philadelphia in 1776, he wrote, "It has not been usual for me to write to you of War or Politicks, - but I know how d^{ee}ply you have always interested yourself in the Welfare of our Country and I am disposed to gratify your Curiosity."¹⁷ This interest of the women in politics was general.

A distant relative of Abigail Adams was Dorothy Quincy, most attractive in person and captivating in manners. She was a sort of a protégée of Madam Lydia Hancock, the aunt of John, who, it is said, planned his marriage with Dorothy Quincy.¹⁸ Before the wedding she witnessed the battle of Lexington,¹⁹ which was the result of the British trying to capture

15 Wells, The Life and Public Services of Samuel Adams, I, pp. 53-54.

Hosmer, Samuel Adams, pp. 50, 152, 306.

16 Cushing, The Writings of Samuel Adams, III, p. 214.

17 Ibid., p. 319.

18 Drake, Our Colonial Homes, p. 9.

19 Ibid., p. 12.

Samuel Adams and John Hancock as much as it was their attempting to remove the gunpowder; thus from the beginning this colonial dame was associated with the War. After her marriage in 1775, according to some old letters to her father, she spent her honeymoon in patriotic duties,- directing commissions, trimming off with her scissors the rough edges of the coarse Continental notes and packing them up to be sent off to the army.²⁰ It was she who faced the possibility of seeing her home burned for the cause of the colonies.²¹ That indeed would have been a generous sacrifice.

As Madam Hancock, she entertained in the Governor's mansion. She was a hospitable mistress. A true daughter of Massachusetts was she. John Adams wrote to his wife of her in 1775, "Among a hundred men, almost, at this house, she lives and behaves with modesty, decency, dignity and discretion, I assure you. Her behaviour is easy and genteel. She avoids talking upon politics. In large and mixed companies she is totally silent, as a lady ought to be."²²

"You and I, my dear Madam, have trod together through one gloomy scene of war, havoc, and desolation," wrote Abigail Adams to Mercy Warren in 1798.²³ Mrs. Warren was one of

20 Drake, Our Colonial Homes, p. 14.

21 Ellet, The Queens of American Society, pp. 116-117.

22 Adams, Familiar Letters, p. 121.

23 Adams, Letters of Mrs. Adams, p. 377.

the closest companions of Mrs. Adams. Mercy Otis could trace her origin back to the early settlers of Massachusetts. Her father was a man of distinction and influence; he was speaker of the provincial legislature, judge of the probate court for Barnstable County, chief-justice of the court of common pleas, council board president during the first years of the War, and on committees of the legislature from 1760 to 1775.²⁴ Her eldest brother was the patriot, James Otis.

Reverend Jonathan Russell, tutor for James and Mercy, loaned her Raleigh's History of the World and encouraged her in the study of history in general, for which she developed a passion.²⁵ She received more than the average amount of schooling for girls. Like them though, she seldom went away from home; one of the rare occasions was to attend James's Commencement at Harvard.²⁶ At the age of twenty-six, past the usual age of marriage, she married James Warren. From then on she was closely connected with public affairs, for he held many offices. It was through her brother's and her husband's public activities that she became interested in politics.²⁷ There was good company in that Plymouth household where men discussed the crisis.

24 New England Historical and Genealogical Register, II, pp. 286-287.

25 Brown, Mercy Warren, p. 23.

26 Ibid., p. 28.

27 Bowen, "Life of James Otis", in Sparks, The Library of American Biography, II, p. 8.

Not alone in her interest in politics was she a typical woman, but also in her reading and her correspondence. Her literary likings conformed to the highest ideals of her time, Addison, Pope, and Dryden.²⁸ She read Abbé Raynal's Philosophical and Political History of the East and West Indies, Gibbon, and Hume. Lord Chesterfield awakened her to a righteous and outspoken indignation. She could not tolerate Tom Paine. She delighted in Chapone. At Mrs. Adams's request, she read Mrs. Seymour's Letters on Education.²⁹ Her poems abound in references which indicate her reading and historical knowledge. In his Travels in the United States, Rochefoucault speaks of Mrs. Warren's extensive and varied reading.³⁰ Even at seventy, she and her husband "read the newspapers on all sides and everything else we can get."³¹

John Adams and James Warren praised her ability as a writer.³² She proceeded to write. Perhaps the satire of Dryden and Pope, two of her favorite authors, induced her to indulge in the satire she used. She had no sense of humor; nor had she sympathy for her enemies. The Adulator, its sequel, The Retreat, and The Group were satires on the Tories. The Sack of Rome and The Ladies of Castile were two other dramas. In 1790, she published these plays and her poems in a small book,

28 Brown, Op. cit., p. 233.

29 Ibid., pp. 234-236.

30 Ellet, The Women of the American Revolution, I, p. 124.

31 Brown, Op. cit., p. 235.

32 Adams, The Works of John Adams, IX, pp. 335-336, 356.

which she dedicated to Washington. All of her contributions to periodicals have not been collected, but she appears to have written for magazines. In the Massachusetts Magazine for January, 1790 was her criticism of Chesterfield.³³ Her last and greatest work was a History of the Rise, Progress, and Termination of the American Revolution, interspersed with Biographical, Political and Moral Reflections in three volumes. It is now of interest only to the student as one of the earliest connected narratives of the struggle.³⁴ Tyler says it is a history written from the particular point of view of the Otises, the Warrens, and the Adamses of New England.³⁵ It was unusual for women to presume to teach the reading world in such a subject as history.

Mrs. Warren was typically religious. She knew that her husband's life was in danger, but she trusted in Providence and in the Divine Protection.³⁶ Her faith was strong, as she showed in her "Lines, Written on the Anniversary of the death of Mr. C.-W.-", her son,

"Let me not ask- but humbly bow my will,³⁷
And own my God, the God of Mercy still."

When she died, Mrs. Adams likened her to "a shock of corn fully ripe for the harvest."³⁸

33 Griswold, The Republican Court, note on p. 200.

34 Foster in Larned, The Literature of American History, Sec. 1537.

35 Tyler, The Literary History of the American Revolution, II, pp. 420-421.

36 Brown, Op. cit., letter to James Warren, pp. 81-83.

37 Warren, Poems, pp. 240-241.

38 Adams, Letters of Mrs. Adams, p. 419.

IV

Abigail Adams

These women were, however, typical only in one or two respects. The bravery of Deborah Samson, Mrs. Wright, and Mrs. Shattuck, the patriotism of Mrs. Draper, Mrs. Knox, Mrs. Hull, and Mrs. Hancock, the self-education of Miss Hannah Adams and Mrs. Warren, and the interest in politics of Mrs. Elizabeth Adams and Mrs. Warren are but scattered examples of the part the colonial dames played in the politics, church, education, correspondence, and patriotic acts. With the exception of Mrs. Warren, there is little historical material concerning these women, and she did not express her feelings. It was Abigail Adams who represented her time.

Abigail Smith Adams was truly a woman of Massachusetts. She derived her origin from the genuine stock of the Puritan settlers of that colony. She was the granddaughter of Colonel John Quincy, a member of the provincial legislature, several times the speaker of the house, afterwards

a member of the council,¹ and for whom Mount Wollaston's name was changed to that of Quincy.² The Quincy family, of Norman origin, can be traced back for more than six centuries. About 1207, the descendant was the Earl of Winchester.³ Edmund Quincy, the emigrant arrived in Boston in 1633 and settled at Mount Wollaston the following year.⁴ From this Edmund Quincy were descended the cousins, Colonel John and Edmund, the father of Dorothy Quincy Hancock.⁵ Mrs. Adams was descended from a long line of ministers, Thomas Shepard of Cambridge, Thomas Shepard of Charlestown, John Norton, of Hingham, and her father, William Smith, of Weymouth for more than forty years.⁶

1 Sketch of the Life of John Quincy Adams, p. 4.

2 New England Historical and Genealogical Register, I, p. 77.

3 Ellet, The Queens of American Society, p. 113.

Adams, Letters of Mrs. Adams. Mrs. Adams says 1224 in her letter to her sister, Mrs. Cranch, from England, 1787, pp. 329-330.

4 Whitmore in Winsor, The Memorial History of Boston, II, p. 546.

5 Ellet, Op. cit., p. 114.

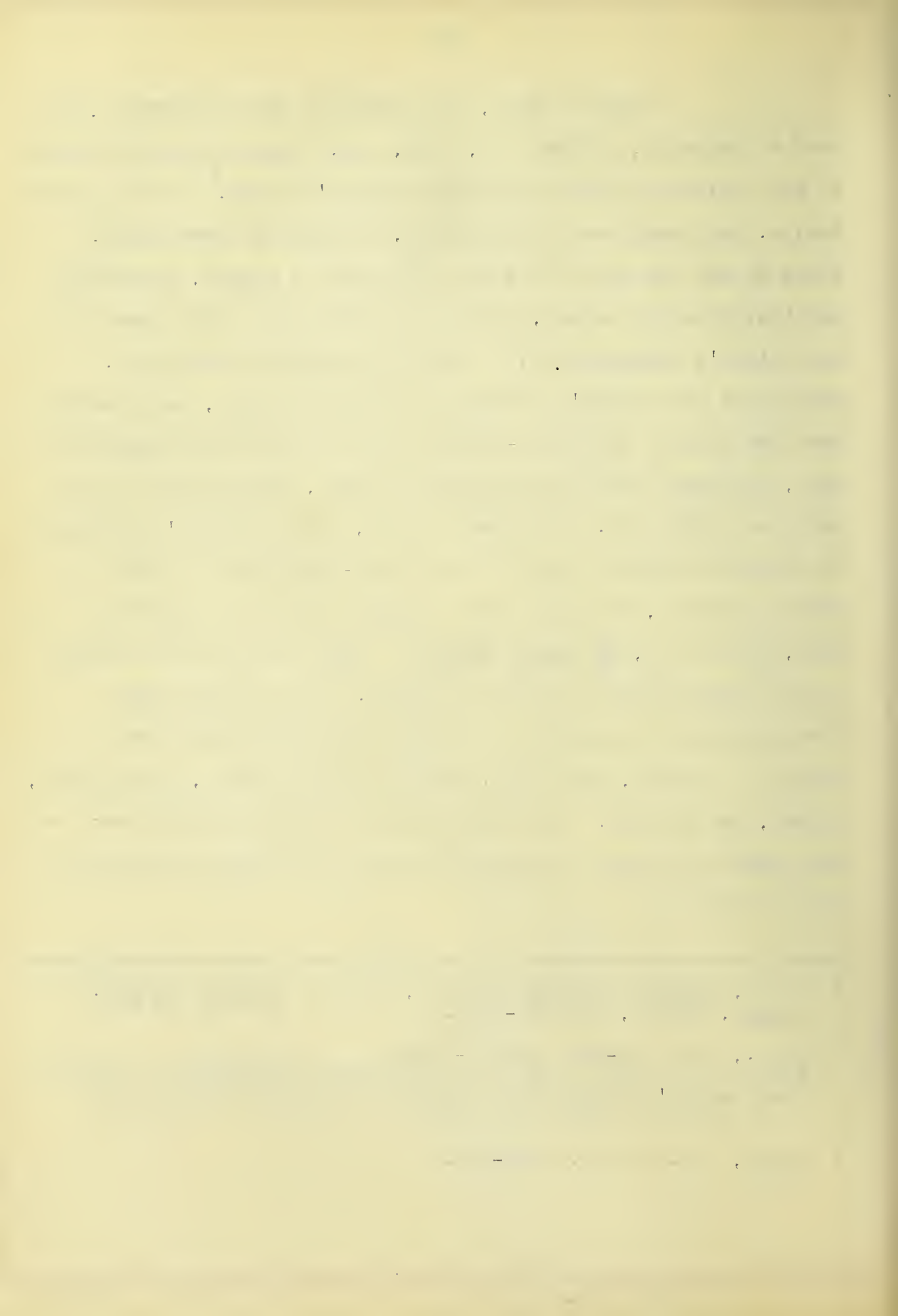
6 Adams, Letters of Mrs. Adams, Memoir, pp. XXI-XXII; Familiar Letters, Memoir, p. IX.

Abigail Smith, the second of three daughters, was born at Weymouth, November 11, 1744, O.S. She spent a great part of her girlhood at her Grandfather Quincy's house.⁷ At the age of twenty, the usual age in those days, she married John Adams. Since he was the son of a small farmer and a lawyer, a calling considered hardly honest, he was not looked upon with favor by her father's parishioners. It is an anecdote told of Mr. Smith that after Mary's marriage to Richard Cranch, he preached from the text in the forty-second verse of the tenth chapter of Luke, "And Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." Two years later, after Abigail's marriage he preached from the text in the thirty-third verse of the seventh chapter, "For John came neither eating nor drinking wine, and ye say, He hath a devil."⁸ The marriage took place on the twenty-fifth of October in 1764. For ten years she lived quietly in Braintree. In those years she became the mother of Abigail, later Mrs. Smith, and three sons, John Quincy, Thomas, and Charles. Her husband continued to practice law; he was absent from home on occasions when he followed the court in its circuits.⁹

7 Adams, Familiar Letters, Memoir, p. XII; Letters of Mrs. Adams, Memoir, pp. XXV-XXVI.

8 Ibid., pp. XIV-XV; XXVIII-XXIX.
The story is told differently by other authorities; some say Mrs. Adams's father was opposed to the marriage and that the daughters chose the texts.

9 Ibid., p. XV; pp. XXIX-XXX.



In the early seventies the relations with the mother country became strained. In the month of August, 1774, John Adams left with Samuel Adams, Thomas Cushing, and Robert Paine, representatives at the First Continental Congress. His family had him for a few months before he returned for the Second Continental Congress. He visited Braintree in August and December, 1775; 1766; and November, 1777. In 1778, he went as a representative of the colonies to France; John Quincy accompanied him. He made the second trip in 1779 with his sons, John Quincy and Charles.¹⁰ During these years, Mrs. Adams looked after the children and the property at home. While he was gone, there was the pestilence which laid many low in Braintree;¹¹ her mother died;¹² she heard the sounds of the battle of Bunker Hill.¹³ She and her daughter, Miss Abigail, joined John Quincy and his father in France in 1784. They removed to England where they spent three years.¹⁴ When they returned to their native town, John Adams bought Leonard Vassall's mansion.

When he was vice-president, the Adams family lived first in New York City, then in Philadelphia. In the first part of the Adams administration, they lived in Philadelphia;¹⁵ in the latter part of the term, they removed to

10 Adams, Op. cit., pp. XVII-XXII; XXXI-XI.

11 Adams, Letters of Mrs. Adams, pp. 53-54; 57-58.

12 Ibid., pp. 52-53; 57.

13 Ibid., pp. 31-32.

14 Adams, Memoirs Op. cit., pp. XXIII-XXV; XLIII-XLIV.

15 Adams, Memoirs, Op. cit., pp. XXV-XXVI; XLIV-XLV.

Washington. Mrs. Adams was the first lady of the White House. Here in the large unfinished mansion, she received and entertained their friends. She did not like Georgetown so well as she did Milton. She used the audience-room as a drying-room for her clothes. The spirit of Massachusetts was in this daughter when she said, "If the twelve years, in which this place has been considered as the future seat of government, had been improved, as they would have been if in New England, very many of the present inconveniences would have been removed." ¹⁶

"It is a little remarkable," John Adams wrote to F. A. Vanderkemp in 1809, "that you never heard the literary character of my consort. There have been few ladies in the world of a more correct or elegant taste. A collection of her letters, for the forty-five years that we have been married, would be worth ten times more than Madame de Sévigné's, though not so perfectly measured in syllables and letters, and would, or at least ought to put to the blush Lady Mary Montagu and all her admirers. So much you will say, for conjugal complaisance. So much, I say, for simple justice to her merit." ¹⁷ Thirty-one years later Charles Francis Adams published the letters of his grandmother under the title, Letters of Mrs. Adams. The first edition of two hundred copies was exhausted almost at once.

16 Adams, Letters of Mrs. Adams, letter to her daughter, Mrs. Smith from Washington, 21 November, 1800, pp. 381-383.

17 Adams, The Works of John Adams, IX, pp. 624-625.

There was a call for a second edition of fifteen hundred copies.¹⁸ The fourth edition was published in 1848. In 1876, Mr. Adams selected letters from these editions and his Letters of John Adams to His Wife and published them as Familiar Letters of John Adams and His Wife, Abigail Adams. Mrs. Adams wrote these letters without any idea of their publication; hence they are of great value as sources,¹⁹ the private, familiar sentiments that show the existing conditions of the years 1761-1816. These letters have lived, although Mrs. Warren's History of the Revolution, intended for her descendants, is no longer read. Besides their value as sources, the letters are charming in themselves. They reveal Mrs. Adams, her characteristics, her tastes, and her ideals.

In her girlhood, Abigail Adams was not without companions of her age. She corresponded with these friends, and they used fictitious names as Calliope, Myra, Arpasia, and Aurelia; she was Diana.²⁰ After her marriage she was Portia to her husband and his friends. She wrote her views of politics and of books to her husband, to her children, to her sisters, to her nieces, and to Mrs. Warren. Thomas Jefferson wrote to her

18 Adams, Charles Francis Adams, p. 40.

19 Hart, American History Told by Contemporaries, II, p. 550.
Adams, Memoirs, Op. cit., p. VIII; p. XXI.

20 Adams, Letters of Mrs. Adams, Memoir, pp. XXVI-XXVII.

of his household management in France.²¹

One could never say Mrs. Adams was narrow. Her interests were many. Her observations were keen. Her interest in politics was no less than that of the other women of her time. As she wrote to her sister, Mrs. Shaw, in 1789, so might she have written for her whole life, "I am fearful of touching upon political subjects; yet, perhaps, there is no person who feels more interested in them."²² She watched the development of affairs. As early as the twelfth of November, 1775, she wanted independence: "I could not join to-day, in the petitions of our worthy pastor, for a reconciliation between our no longer parent state, but tyrant state, and these colonies. Let us separate; they are unworthy to be our brethen. Let us renounce them; and instead of supplications, as formerly, for their prosperity and happiness, let us beseech the Almighty to blast their counsels, and bring to nought all their devices."²³ Again in May of 1776, she maintained independence was the only course for the colonies. A people, she believed, may let a king fall and remain a people; but if a king let his people slip from him, he was no longer a king. George the Third had certainly let the colonies slip from him, then why did they not proclaim their independence to the world?²⁴

21 Ford, The Writings of Thomas Jefferson, IV, pp. 101, 260.

22 Adams, Letters of Mrs. Adams, p. 345.

23 Ibid., letter to John Adams, p. 61.

24 Ibid., p. 75.

Her keenness for political observations did not escape her husband. He wrote to James Warren that their wives would have to teach their children the science of politics, and he added in his half-humorous way that he suspected they understood it better than he and Warren did.²⁵

Mrs. Adams's interest in politics was not confined to the existing state of affairs. She was a progressive. Before the Declaration of Independence, she sent to her husband at the Continental Congress a "List of Female Grievances." She promised him in her playful way, half-serious, a rebellion of the ladies as they would not hold themselves bound by any laws in which they had no voice or representation.²⁶ Stewart calls her "an ardent suffragist,"²⁷ but one is inclined to take her "List of Female Grievances" as her husband did, rather lightly. She could not have been an ardent suffragist in that Puritan day. Her seriousness was probably in reference to the lack of educational advantages for women, as she expressed her progressive ideas later. "If you complain of neglect of education in sons, what shall I say with regard to daughters, who every day experience the want of it?" she asked John Adams, August 14, 1776. "I most sincerely wish that some more liberal plan might be laid and executed for the benefit of the rising generation, and that our new Constitution

25 Adams, The Works of John Adams, IX, p. 339.

26 Adams, Familiar Letters, pp. 149-150.

27 Stewart, "Some Ancient New Women" in the Arena, XXVI, p. 514.

may be distinguished for encouraging learning and virtue. If we mean to have heroes, statesmen, and philosophers, we should have learned women. The world perhaps would laugh at me and accuse me of vanity, but you, I know, have a mind too enlarged and liberal to disregard the sentiment. If much depends, as is allowed, upon the early education of youth, and the first principles which are instilled take the deepest root, great benefit must arise from literary accomplishments in women."²⁸

Closely connected with her concern in the public welfare were her economic interests. She kept her husband informed as to the current prices and paper money.²⁹ She was shrewd, "I have come to this determination, to sell no more bills, unless I can procure hard money for them, although I shall be obliged to allow a discount."³⁰ When she wrote, "As to goods of any kind, we cannot tell what quantity there is. Only two or three shops open. Goods at most extravagant prices. All the better to promote manufactures,"³¹ she showed her desire for the economic independence and welfare of the colonies.

A strong faith was hers. She was a typical Puritan of her age. When she was in Auteuil, she was shocked at

28 Adams, Op. cit., p. 213.

29 Adams, Letters of Mrs. Adams, pp. 30, 43, 66, 94, 101, 104-105, 107, 120.

30 Ibid., pp. 107-108.

31 Adams, Familiar Letters, p. 157.

Madame Helvetius greeting Franklin with "Helas! Franklin", and a double kiss, one upon each cheek and another upon the forehead.³² The Puritan, says Smyth, was shocked at the French lady of the salon, a product of the sceptical and unconventional eighteenth century France.³³ Again we see the Puritan of Massachusetts when she refused to play cards at a ladies' rout in London, because it was Sunday evening.³⁴ These are but individual incidents of the severe Puritan training. Her strong faith shows throughout her letters. They are rich in their allusions to the Bible. She even adopted the biblical style, as "May their deliverance be wrought out for them, as it was for the children of Egypt."³⁵

She wrote to Mrs. Cranch in 1786, "I would not omit to mention that I visited the Church at Leyden, in which our forefathers worshipped, when they fled from hierarchical tyranny and persecution. I felt a respect and veneration upon entering the doors, like what the ancients paid to their Druids."³⁶ It was this faith of her forefathers that kept her brave and courageous. She trusted God when John Adams was on his way to Europe,³⁷ and when her little son, Charles, was returning to her from France with Gillon, who surrendered his ship.³⁸ As she herself put it,

32 Adams, Letters of Mrs. Adams, p. 199.

33 Smyth, The Writings of Benjamin Franklin, X, pp. 439-440.

34 Adams, Letters of Mrs. Adams, p. 280.

35 Ibid., p. 26.

36 Ibid., p. 304.

37 Ibid., p. 92.

38 Ibid., pp. 128-129.

"Religion noble comfort brings,

Disarms our griefs and blunts their stings.'" ³⁹

Her religious influence was far-reaching. John Quincy Adams was deeply religious. Her letters to him remind one of the long sermons of the time- almost too much preaching- typically Puritan. There is something beautiful in the faith that brought forth, "I never view the ocean without being filled with ideas of the sublime, and am ready to break forth with the Psalmist, 'Great and marvellous are they works, Lord God Almighty; in wisdom has thou made them all!'" ⁴⁰

In a letter written in 1817, Mrs. Adams remarked about her education, "My early education did not partake of the abundant opportunities which the present days offer, and which even our common country schools now afford. I never was sent to any school. I was always sick. Female education, in the best families, went no further than writing and arithmetic; in some few and rare instances, music and dancing." ⁴¹ She seems to have derived the most of her training from her Grandmother Quincy, with whom she spent a great deal of her time. ⁴² She was undoubtedly better situated than most of her contemporaries in her

39 Waterston, Discourse on the Life and Character of John Quincy Adams, p. 9.

40 Adams, Letters of Mrs. Adams, p. 164.

41 Adams, Memoirs, Op. cit., p. XI; XXIV.

42 Ibid., p. XII; XXV-XXVI.

opportunities for education; as the daughter of a clergyman, she was a member of the best society of the neighborhood.⁴³ There was, however, this typical element of the time in her education that she was largely self-taught. Like the other women, she read the best of English literature. Her husband tells of her familiarity with Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, Pope, Addison, Swift, Tillotson, Butler, Locke, Thomson, Collins, and Young. Thomson and Collins, called poets of freedom, were favorites of Mrs. Adams.⁴⁴ So fond of Collins was she that she taught John Quincy to repeat daily after the Lord's Prayer, the Ode, "How sleep the brave."⁴⁵ When Dr. Joseph Warren fell at Bunker Hill, she repeated those lines; she wrote to her husband that after Dr. Warren's death "those favorite lines of Collins continually sound in my ears."⁴⁶

Mrs. Adams's reading and tastes show throughout her letters. Like the writers of her century, she used many metaphors involving mythological legends. She declared, "It is very provoking to have such a plenty so near us, but Tantalus-like, not be able to touch."⁴⁷ She compared the Schuylkill to the Hudson as she was to Hercules.⁴⁸ Arnold had his Myrmidons.⁴⁹ There are

43 Drake, Our Colonial Homes, p. 84.

44 Adams, The Works of John Adams, I, p. 63.

45 Adams, Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, I, p. 6.

46 Adams, Letters of Mrs. Adams, p. 32.

47 Ibid., p. 43.

48 Ibid., p. 348.

49 Adams, Op. cit., p. 122.

many references to the English poets of her time. She quoted Young, Pope, Goldsmith, Gay, and Thomson, whom she called "my favorite Thomson."⁵⁰ Swift's Journal of a Modern Lady, she thought, though written sixty years before her time, perfectly applicable; and though noted as the changeable sex, in this scene of dissipation they had been steady.⁵¹ "I believe," she wrote to Miss Lucy Cranch, "Richardson has done more towards embellishing the present age, and teaching them the talent of letter-writing than any other modern I can name. You know I am passionately fond of all his works, even to his 'Pamela'".⁵² After describing the disagreeable sea-sickness she passed through while crossing the ocean, she said, "When you add to all this the horrid dirtiness of the ship, the slovenliness of the steward, and the unavoidable slopping and spilling occasioned by the tossing of the ship, I am sure you will be thankful that the pen is not in the hand of Swift or Smollet."⁵³ Baron de Stael, the Swedish Ambassador to Paris, came nearest to the manners and personal appearance that she had formed in her imagination of Sir Charles Grandison.⁵⁴

50 Adams, Familiar Letters, p. 161.

51 Adams, Letters of Mrs. Adams, p. 259.

52 Ibid., p. 261.

53 Ibid., p. 158.

54 Adams, Op. cit., p. 249.

When she saw General Washington, these lines of Dryden instantly occurred to her,

"Mark his majestic fabric! he's a temple
Sacred by birth, and built by hands divine;
His soul's the deity that lodges there;
Nor is the pile unworthy of the god." ⁵⁵

Lee reminded her of his namesake, Charles the Twelfth of Sweden. ⁵⁶

The distances between her and her friends made correspondence necessary to discuss her reading and other activities. We find her sending to Mrs. Warren in 1773 the first volume of Moliere for her opinions of the plays. She herself did not like them; they lacked spirit; the characters appeared unfinished. He seemed, here we see the Puritan woman, to have ridiculed vice without engaging his readers to virtue, and though he sometimes made them laugh, it was a smile of indignation. He possessed one negative virtue- that of decency. ⁵⁷

She told John Adams in 1774 that she had taken a very great fondness for reading Rollin's Ancient History since he had left her. In the same paragraph, she wrote, "We have had a charming rain, which lasted twelve hours, and has greatly

55 Adams, Op. cit., p. 40.

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid., p. 11.

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revived the dying fruits of the earth." ⁵⁸ This digression reminds one that she had to look after her household and farm affairs. Her leisure time for reading was not great in quantity, but it was well spent. The reading of ancient history comes out in her references to the military school of the Carthaginians, ⁵⁹ to the crimes of Nero, Caligula, and Caesar Borgia, ⁶⁰ to the oratory of Cicero as aroused, kindled, and inflamed by the tyranny of Catiline, Verres, and Mark Anthony, ⁶¹ and to the misfortunes of Sparta due to the great love of peace which made the city neglectful of making that peace sure and lasting. ⁶²

She read the contemporary literature which was chiefly political pamphlets. She was charmed with Common Sense. ⁶³ This self-education through reading was encouraged by her husband and son. She requested the former to obtain for her a copy of Chesterfield's Letters; ⁶⁴ but he advised her not to read them, and she submitted entirely to his judgment as she had always found him ready to oblige her in any way that he thought would contribute to her entertainment or improvement. ⁶⁵ When he was in Paris, he

58 Adams, Op. cit., p. 12.

59 Ibid., p. 84.

60 Ibid., p. 96.

61 Ibid., p. 111.

62 Ibid., p. 12.

63 Ibid., p. 68.

64 Adams, Familiar Letters, p. 143.

65 Ibid., p. 161.

asked her, "Have you ever read J. J. Rousseau? If not, read him. Your cousin Smith has him. What a difference between him and Chesterfield and even Voltaire."⁶⁶ When her son was abroad he described his experiences in his letters to her, as his impressions of Russia,⁶⁷ popular societies in the Netherlands,⁶⁸ and the prevailing French policy toward the United States in 1798.⁶⁹ Mrs. Adams's interests in learning never declined. While she was in France in 1784, she read the plays of Racine, Voltaire, Corneille, and Crebillon in French with the help of a dictionary by reading a play a day.⁷⁰

Abigail Adams was a typical woman of Massachusetts in her correspondence, in her interest in politics, in her religious life, and in her education. The women were patriots. She was as devoted to her country as they. She gave as freely as Mrs. Draper, Mrs. Samuel Adams, or Mrs. Warren. Mr. Adams found infinite support and comfort in her patriotism. His account of Dickinson contrasted their cases. "That gentleman's mother and wife," he says, "were continually distressing him with their remonstrances. His mother said to him: 'Johnny, you will

66 Adams, Familiar Letters, p. 349.

67 Ford, Writings of John Quincy Adams, I, pp. 10-13.

68 Ibid., pp. 331-333.

69 Ibid., II, pp. 234-236.

70 Adams, Letters of Mrs. Adams, p. 211.

be hanged; your estate will be forfeited and confiscated; you will leave your excellent wife a widow, and your charming children orphans, beggars and 'infamous'. From my soul I pitied Mr. Dickinson..... If my mother and my wife had expressed such sentiments to me, I was certain that, if they did not wholly unman me and make me an apostate, they would make me the most miserable man alive." ⁷¹ When John Adams told his wife that he was to be a representative to Boston in the great Convention, June 16, 1770, "that excellent lady, who has always encouraged me, burst into a flood of tears, and said she was very sensible to all the danger to her and to our children, as well as to me, but she thought I had done as I ought; she was very willing to share in all that was to come, and to place her trust in Providence." ⁷²

Four years passed, and the British troops arrived in Massachusetts. "For the space of twelve months," John Quincy Adams wrote seventy-two years later to Mr. Sturge, of Birmingham, "my mother with her infant children dwelt, liable every hour of the day and of the night to be butchered in cold blood, or taken and carried into Boston as hostages, by any foraging or marauding detachment of men, like that actually sent forth on the 19th of April to capture John Hancock and Samuel Adams, on their way to

71 Morse, John Adams, pp. 82-83.

72 Ibid., p. 40.

attend the continental Congress at Philadelphia. My father was separated from his family, on his way to attend the same continental Congress, and there my mother with her children lived in unintermitted danger of being with them all in a conflagration kindled by a torch in the same hands which on the 17th of June lighted the fires of Charlestown."⁷³ Nevertheless Mrs. Adams was brave and generous. "Soldiers coming in for a lodging," she wrote to her husband in 1775, "for breakfast, for supper, for drink, etc. Sometimes refugees from Boston, tired and fatigued, seek an asylum for a day, a night, a week. You can hardly imagine how we live."⁷⁴ Time after time she begged him to be as particular as possible when he wrote, as people came to her inquiring about the decisions of Congress and the development of affairs.⁷⁵

Besides the encouragement she gave to Mrs. Adams and her neighbors and the assistance to the soldiers, there is her patriotic spirit, the spirit of enthusiasm and willingness. "As for me I will seek wool and flax, and work willingly with my hands; and, indeed, there is occasion for all our industry and economy,"⁷⁶ she wrote to her husband in 1774. Two years later she declared, "If it is necessary to make any more drafts upon us, the women must reap the harvests. I am willing to do my part."

73 Adams, Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, I, p. 5.

74 Adams, Letters of Mrs. Adams, pp. 27-28.

75 Ibid., pp. 15, 27, 30, 65.

76 Ibid., p. 22.

I believe I could gather corn, and husk it; but I should make
⁷⁷
 a poor figure at digging potatoes." That spirit had not died in
 1778, "I would not exchange my country for the wealth of the
 Indies, or be any other than an American, though I might be
 queen or empress of any nation upon the globe."⁷⁸

Mrs. Adams's was no small part. She gave up her
 husband for the public service. In 1777, she wrote to him, "It
 is almost thirteen years since we were united, but not more than
 half that time have we had the happiness of living together. The
 unfeeling world may consider it in what light they please. I
 consider it as a sacrifice to my country, and one of my greatest
 misfortunes, to be separated from my children, at a time of life
 when the joint instructions and admonition of parents sink deeper
 than in maturer years."⁷⁹ October 25, 1777, was their thirteenth
 wedding anniversary. "Three years of this time," she reminded
 him, "we have been cruelly separated. I have, patiently as I
 could, endured it, with the belief that you were serving your
 country, and rendering your fellow creatures essential benefits."⁸⁰
 The twenty-fifth of October, 1782, was another anniversary, and
 they were separated again. He was in England. She wrote,
 "I feel a disposition to quarrel with a race of beings who have

77 Adams, Letters of Mrs. Adams, p. 82.

78 Ibid., p. 93.

79 Adams, Op. cit., pp. 86-87.

80 Ibid., p. 89.

cut me off, in the midst of my days, from the only society I delighted in. 'Yet no man liveth for himself', says an authority I will not dispute."⁸¹

There is a pathetic appeal in her letter of the twenty-seventh of December, 1778. Her husband has been gone for eleven months. Her son, Charles, has learned a Scotch song for his mother,

"His very foot has music in't,

As he comes up the stairs'.

How oft has my heart danced to the sound of that music?

'And shall I see his face again?

And shall I hear him speak?'"⁸²

Yet nowhere is her zeal shown more than when some one asked her, "If you had known that Mr. Adams would have remained so long abroad, would you have consented that he should have gone?' I recollected myself a moment, and then spoke the real dictates of my heart. 'If I had known, Sir, that Mr. Adams could have effected what he has done, I would not only have submitted to the absence I have endured, painful as it has been, but I would not have opposed it, even though three years should be added to the number,

81 Adams, Op. cit., p. 132.

82 Ibid., pp. 102-103.

(which Heaven avert!) I feel a pleasure in being able to sacrifice my selfish passions to the general good, and in imitating the example, which has taught me to consider myself and family but as the small dust of the balance, when compared with the great community.'" 83

After one has labelled her typical characteristics as interests in politics, religious beliefs, literary tastes and habits, and patriotism, there are delightful little exceptions which seem to belong to Mrs. Adams alone. There are her home interests. She loved her simple home-life. From London, where she wore lustring silk and was presented to George the Third and Charlotte, she wrote to her niece, Miss Elizabeth Cranch, "When you write again, tell me whether my fruit trees in the garden bear fruit, and whether you raised any flowers from the seeds I sent you." 84 In the first administration, she lived at Richmond Hill, New York. She liked "the venerable oaks and broken ground covered with wild shrubs which surround me give a natural beauty to the spot which is truly enchanting." 85 After President Adams's term expired, the family lived in Quincy. There Colonel Smith, her son-in-law, sent her some raspberry bushes and a pot of strawberry vines. She promised him that she would pay particular attention to them and added that he should see her operations of a dairy-woman at five o'clock in the morning skimming her milk. 86

83 Adams, Op. cit., p. 137.

84 Ibid., p. 282.

85 Humphreys, Catherine Schuyler, p. 220.

86 Adams, Letters of Mrs. Adams, pp. 385-386.

"You will find your father in his fields," she wrote to her son, Thomas, "attending to his hay-makers, and your mother busily engaged in the domestic concerns of her family."⁸⁷

Now and then there is a playful tone about her letters. Her poor cows would certainly petition John Adams about the drought, setting forth their grievances, and informing him that they have been deprived of their ancient privileges, whereby they had become great sufferers, and desired that they may be restored to them.⁸⁸ She offered Jefferson a son in exchange for his daughter; Jefferson replied in the same light tone that he could not trade, that he had such a habit of gaining in trade with her he always expected it.⁸⁹ When she described her dress for the Ambassador's ball in London to Miss Cranch, she thought she heard her niece say, "'Full gay, I think, for my aunt.'" "That is true, Lucy," she replied, "but nobody is old in Europe."⁹⁰ Her cleverness is shown in a letter written to Mrs. Shaw from Philadelphia in 1791. "It is a maxim here," she wrote, "that he who dies with studying dies in a good cause, and may go to another world much better calculated to improve his talents, than if he had died a blockhead. Well, knowledge is a fine thing, and Mother Eve thought so; but she smarted so

87 Adams, Letters of Mrs. Adams, pp. 385-386.

88 Ibid., p. 15.

89 Ford, The Writings of Thomas Jefferson, IV, p. 261.

90 Adams, Letters of Mrs. Adams, pp. 284-286.

severely for hers, that most of her daughters have been afraid of it since."⁹¹ At the age of sixty-seven, she wrote to her granddaughter, "As if you love me, proverbially, you must love my dog. You will be glad to learn that Juno yet lives, although like her mistress she is gray with age."⁹² The following year she wrote to this same granddaughter that they had had a happy day the nineteenth of November. They had retired at eleven. "We do not so every week. I tell it you as one of the marvels of the age. By all this, you will learn that grandmother is rid of her croaking, and that grandfather is in good health, and that both of us are as tranquil as that bald old fellow, called Time, will let us be."⁹³

Many people loved her. "That heart must indeed be strangely constituted, that can know my mother without being sensible of her excellence,"⁹⁴ wrote John Quincy Adams. She had many friends and interests in her last years. When Mr. Henry Bradshaw Fearon, an Englishman, visited Boston in 1817, he was taken out to see the ex-president by Charles Francis Adams. He has left this description: "The ex-president is a handsome old gentleman of eighty-four; his lady is seventy-six (neither is correct);- she has the reputation of superior talents and great literary acquirements. Upon the present occasion the minister

91 Adams, Letters of Mrs. Adams, p. 358.

92 Ibid., p. 404.

93 Ibid., pp. 410-411.

94 Adams, Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, I, p. 54.

(the day being Sunday) was of the dinner party. As the table of a 'late King' may be amusing, take the following particulars: first course- a pudding made of Indian corn, molasses, and butter; second- veal, bacon, neck of mutton, potatoes, cabbages, carrots, and Indian beans; Madeira wine, of which each drank two glasses. We sat down to dinner at one o'clock: at two, nearly all went a second time to church. For tea we had pound cake, wheat bread and butter, and bread made of Indian corn and rye (similar to our brown, home-made). Tea was brought from the kitchen, and handed round by a neat white servant girl. The topics of conversation were various- England, America, religion, politics, literature, science and Dr. Priestley, Miss Edgeworth, Mrs. Siddons, Mr. Zean, France, Shakespeare, Moore, Lord Byron, Cobbett, American Revolution, the traitor, General Arnold." ⁹⁵

In 1818, Mrs. Adams died at the age of seventy-four, the companion of John Adams for fifty-four years. Mrs. and Mrs. Adams were buried at Quincy. On a tablet is this message to the Pilgrim,

"From lives thus spent they earthly duties learn;
From fancy's dreams to active virtue turn;
Let Freedom, Friendship, Faith thy soul engage,
And serve, like them, thy country and thy age." ⁹⁶

95 Drake, Our Colonial Homes, pp. 93-94.

96 Adams, The Works of John Adams, I, p. 644.

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Waterston, R. C.,

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Wells, William V.,

The Life and Public Services of Samuel Adams, Being a Narrative of His Acts and Opinions, and of His Agency in Producing and Forwarding the American Revolution, With Extracts from His Correspondence, State Papers, and Political Essays,

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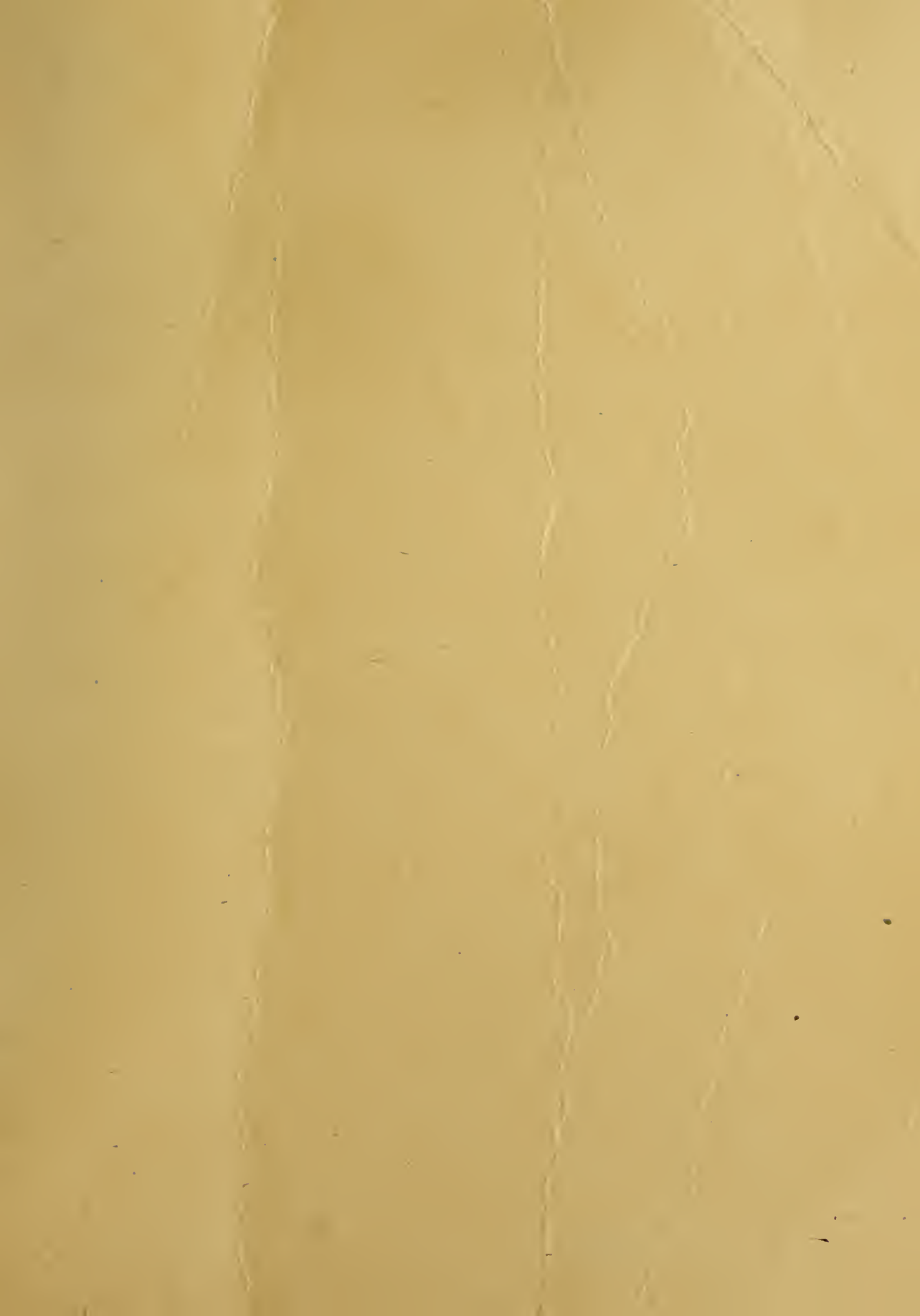
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Winsor, Justin, (Editor)

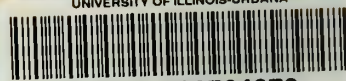
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